

Message Text

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PAGE 01 JERUSA 00455 161556Z
ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 455

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, LE, IS
SUBJ: REPORTS OF LEBANESE ARMY IN SOUTHERN LEBANON

1. UN SOURCE PASSED ON, WITH SOME INCREDULITY, FOLLOWING REPORT FEBRUARY 16 FROM UNMO'S IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. ACCORDING TO UNMO'S IN OP KHIAM, 100 LEBANESE ARMY PERSONNEL HAVE RECENTLY ARRIVED AT KHIAM WITH 55 MM ANTI-AIRCRAFT WEAPONS, RECOILESS RIFLES AND 81 MM MORTARS, AND ARE SHARING TOWN WITH LEFTISTS. UNMO'S INSIST THAT NEWLY ARRIVED LEBANESE ARE "KHOURY'S MEN" AND DESCRIBE THEM AS "UNIFORMED BUT NOT WELL-ORGANIZED." RUMOR IS THAT, AT APPROPRIATE MOMENT, THESE LEBANESE WILL ATTEMPT TO EXPEL PALESTINIANS FROM KHIAM. ANOTHER RUMOR CIRCULATING IS THAT KHOURY'S MEN WILL SOON ARRIVE AT NAQUORA TO REPLACE PALESTINIANS NOW GUARDING UN COMPOUND.

2. COMMENT: WE FIND ABOVE REPORT OF SUCH LEBANESE ARMY ACTIVITY DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE IN LIGHT OF KHOURY'S PREVIOUS RELUCTANCE TO RISK OPEN CONFLICTS WITH PALESTINIANS, AND FACT THAT WE HAVE HEARD NO ISRAELI REPORTS OF SUCH ACTIVITY.
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HOWEVER, WE HAVE COME TO THINK THAT ALMOST ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN IN LEBANON, SO REPORT IT FOR WHAT IT MAY BE WORTH.
NEWLIN

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NNN

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